

904.71  
G1392

THE  
RELATIONS OF THE COLONIES  
TO THE EMPIRE :  
PRESENT AND FUTURE.

---

TWO ADDRESSES,  
*DELIVERED IN EDINBURGH AND GREENOCK,*  
BY  
SIR ALEXANDER T. GALT, G.C.M.G.

---

LONDON :  
PRINTED BY M<sup>C</sup>CORQUODALE & CO., LIMITED,  
CARDINGTON STREET, N.W.

---

*February, 1883.*

G 139 九

THE  
RELATIONS OF THE COLONIES  
TO THE EMPIRE :  
PRESENT AND FUTURE.

---

TWO ADDRESSES,  
*DELIVERED IN EDINBURGH AND GREENOCK,*  
BY  
SIR ALEXANDER T. GALT, G.C.M.G.

---

LONDON :  
PRINTED BY M<sup>C</sup>CORQUODALE & CO., LIMITED,  
CARDINGTON STREET, N.W.

---

*February, 1883.*

P  
C

3002101214  
Y71112-111A2

## INTRODUCTION.

---

The two addresses reprinted in the following pages were delivered by invitation—that in Edinburgh from the Lord Provost and other influential gentlemen, and that in Greenock from the Provost, Magistrates, and the Chamber of Commerce. They were not given by me officially as High Commissioner for Canada, but solely as the views of a colonist on subjects of much interest; and I publish them in the hope that they may lead to the early and full discussion of matters yearly becoming of greater importance.

A. T. GALT.

LONDON,

*February, 1883.*



*An ADDRESS delivered in the MERCHANTS' HALL,  
EDINBURGH, on 26th January, 1883.*

---

The LORD PROVOST OF EDINBURGH in the Chair.

---

Sir ALEXANDER GALT:—My Lord Provost, ladies and gentlemen,—I have first of all to return my thanks to the Lord Provost for his condescension in taking the chair on this occasion, but still more are my thanks due to his lordship for the kindly reference he has made to my respected father. If there is one thing more than another that I am glad to find in Scotland, it is the mention of my name in connection with my father's reputation. He was, I believe, a true Scotchman, and I hope his sons in Canada have not degenerated. Let me also return my acknowledgments to those gentlemen who have been so kind as to invite me to deliver an address on the relations of the colonies to the empire. There is no part of that great empire which I should have myself chosen for the purpose so soon as the place where we are now meeting. Scotland and Scotsmen have been distinguished in building up the great colonial empire abroad. They have carried their genius and their energy, and, if I may say so, their Scotch thrift, to every part of the world; and there is no colony that I know of where the influence of Scotsmen is not felt in the government of the possessions which acknowledge the sway of our gracious Queen. In venturing to speak before you this afternoon on the subject of the empire, I ought to preface my remarks by a disclaimer of appearing before you in any official or representative capacity. I must speak frankly if I am to speak with any advantage, and I have no right to speak for the Government which I have the

honour to represent on such subjects as I shall touch upon. It is in my character as a colonial Scotsman that I desire to offer those observations that I wish to address to you. In order to save the necessity of troubling you with many figures, I have prepared a summary of the "Area, Population, Finances, Commerce, and Shipping" of the British Empire, which, I hope, is in the hands of most of the gentlemen present. This summary has been prepared from reliable statistical data. It follows very closely a simple statement which appears in a very admirable book that has been published under the auspices of the Cobden Club, called the "Vade Mecum." I have somewhat departed from the figures in that statement, believing that those which I have taken from the official records will be found to be rather more approximately accurate. The alterations have all been in the direction of reduction of the large figures, not in the way of exaggeration. And, now, let us consider for a moment what the composition of the British Empire is. It consists of 8 millions of square miles of the earth's surface, yielding every production that is required for the use of civilised man; inhabited by 241 millions of human beings, governed by 35 millions in these islands, and by 10 millions of the same race scattered wide-cast through the possessions of the empire. This vast population contributes yearly for its government, and the development of the material resources of the country, no less a revenue than 184 millions sterling. Of this, 84 millions represents the revenue of Great Britain, and 100 millions is the aggregate revenue of the possessions of which I shall have occasion to speak. It would be hopeless to attempt to compute the internal traffic of this vast population and this enormous country; it would be quite hopeless to endeavour to measure the interchange of labour that takes place. But we may get approximately some idea of what that great industry is by looking at the sea-borne trade—the exchange that takes place between the mother country and foreign countries, and between her colonies and foreign countries; and it will be found that that amounts in the aggregate to



the enormous sum of 1,040 millions sterling—700 millions in round figures belonging to this country, and no less than 340 millions being the foreign import and export trade of the British possessions abroad. This enormous trade employs 8,300,000 tons of shipping belonging to the subjects of the Queen; and, as a little evidence of the value of one of the colonies, I may state that if that 8,300,000 Canada alone possesses 1,300,000 tons. She is only one out of many colonies; circumstances, perhaps, have caused a greater development of this particular industry in that colony than in others. Circumstances have given her facilities in the development of her fisheries to propagate a nursery of seamen; and I may venture for one moment here to digress to tell you that at the last census she had no less than 47,000 men and boys employed in her shore fisheries. Measure for one moment the value of that amount of naval strength added to that of this country. It is a source of additional security if only maintained and developed. Such, in very brief terms, is the empire to which we all belong. It has been ages in acquisition. It has been created by the genius and the heroism of our race for centuries, and I think that the preservation of it and the development of it are the very highest objects which can engage the attention of our statesmen. It is only, as it were, in its commencement. It is the future of this great empire that is really the most interesting subject we can consider. If we see what it has done within the last few years, one is struck with something like astonishment; but when we remember the influence of steamships, of railways, of telegraphs, it is manifest that the great natural resources of Canada, Australia, the Cape of Good Hope, and the numberless colonies which belong to the empire, must receive much greater development in the future than they possibly can have had in the past. And it must be remembered that of late years we have seen that Europe has felt the pressure of over-population. It is not confined to this country; it has extended to Germany and to Scandinavia, and it is now reaching Italy, Bohemia, Hungary—in fact, all the nations of Europe. A large tide of emigration is

now yearly flowing out. That emigration has only two points to which it can be directed. One is the great United States. It is the place where at present the great bulk of the emigration goes; but it must be remembered that the ability of the United States to absorb that emigration is daily diminishing. That country is rapidly becoming filled with people, and therefore, leaving the United States to one side, there remain only the vast possessions of the British Crown as the point to which emigration can be directed. Just conceive the additional strength we should derive from that state of matters. These various populations—we see it in the United States—are blending with the existing people; they share our institutions, they admire them, they believe them to be better than those they lived under in the countries they had left; and, instead of being a danger, we shall find they will be a strength and support to us. We have the finest unoccupied portion of the world. If you look over the map of the globe, you will find that the possessions which own the sway of the Queen are at this moment really the only unoccupied portion of the globe suited for a European population. If you once part with those possessions they never can be restored. There is no future for the British Empire if you once allow it to be disintegrated and severed. The world does not permit of it. Once gone it is gone for ever. Now the question naturally arises, Is there anything in the British Empire at this moment that threatens its future existence? I think there are some causes, and I will venture to state them. I state them with submission to the very much better information that you may possess, but they are those which are suggested to us in the colonies by our own observation. We think that there is a great deal too much apathy, and I might even add the word ignorance, in regard to the colonies of the empire. Frequently in the press we see it spoken of as if the increase of prosperity in a country like Canada or in Australia would have for its natural result independence—that they would part from the mother country. Now the colonies do not like that. Colonists do not believe this is, or ought to be, the policy of this country. We believe that the policy of the Government ought to draw us

closer together; that the self-government which is developing our strength should be made a source of future strength to this country. And in the colonies there is a certain amount of danger. There is a sense of isolation—the sense that they are comparatively alone, that they are not those inherent parts of the empire in that sense which makes them in fact co-partners in all your joys and hopes, and, I may add, in all your sorrows. The colonies have no share in the government of the empire. They govern themselves, but they have no word in the great questions that come up for discussion. For instance, there is the question of peace and war, which in itself is one carrying, it may be, desolation to the homes of colonists and destruction to their property: they have no voice in the settlement of such a question as that. And believing, as I firmly do, that the British Empire is an empire of peace, that it is not an empire that any reasonable men desire to see extended by force, I say that the possession of those colonies is in itself the strongest guarantee that that policy will be carried out. It is not the outlying portions of the empire certainly that would desire to provoke contests with other countries. I will now venture to call your attention for a moment to what these colonies themselves are in reference to the summary I have just read. I will not refer to India, because, though India is a possession, and a most valuable possession, of the Crown—one of enormous importance—still it is, we may say, *sui generis*; it is not one you can speak of in the same connection as the self-governing colonies. I make the same remark in reference to the military and naval stations that stud the face of the earth. These are posts held by this country as a means of maintaining its influence throughout the rest of the world and protecting its several possessions. I therefore desire more particularly to refer to what are known as the self-governing colonies—those colonies which, under the wise policy of this country, have been permitted to have the freest form of self-government. Now I desire to consider with the self-governing colonies, the West Indies, because I believe the time is not remote when the constitution which was enjoyed by Jamaica for some time, and afterwards parted with, will be

restored, and that the population of the West Indies and the ruling race there will have very soon given to them the same measure of self-government which is enjoyed by the other colonies. Now, leaving out the Indian Empire, the self-governing colonies occupy seven-eighths of the whole territory of the empire, or seven millions of square miles. They have a population now of 10,800,000 souls, and of these nine millions are the descendants of the people of these islands. It is the same race, certainly as well educated, as enterprising, and as progressive; and in point of numbers, though scattered over a large expanse, it actually exceeds the population of Ireland and Scotland to-day. They have a revenue of 29 millions, obtained and expended in the government and the maintenance of law and order throughout this vast expanse of territory. Their trade, export and import, amounts to 175 millions, of which 90 millions is with the mother country, and 85 millions with foreign countries. I think it will be rather surprising to many gentlemen to know that there is so large an interchange of productions between the colonies of the empire—the self-governing colonies, without reference to India—as 85 millions with foreign nations. In 1890—it will very soon reach us—there can be no doubt that Canada and Australia alone will have 10 millions of population, and probably the other colonies will bring up the total to 14 millions. Now the question arises, whether that population—intelligent, educated, energetic—is likely to remain contented with precisely the same share which they now have in the great affairs of the British Empire. I think it may be doubted. It is a very doubtful question whether, as these various countries increase in material—we may say national—strength, they will continue to be pleased with the position they occupy to-day. At the same time, the only suggestion which apparently has been offered in some quarters, and to which I alluded a few moments ago, is that, if they are not content, separation must follow. Now, is this either desirable or necessary? It is a question, I think, of the utmost importance, and one which I answer in the negative. It is, in my opinion, neither desirable nor necessary. There can be no question that

the colonies all desire to maintain the connection; that is their present feeling beyond doubt. They are loyal beyond all question, and whenever an occasion arises where they can show their devotion to the interests of the country at large, they are always ready to do it. The self-government which has been granted to them has increased their attachment. We know, as a matter of history, that when they were governed as Crown colonies, directed from Downing Street, there were constant differences arising, constant questions that tended to embitter their relations. But since they have had self-government the colonies have been marked by increased attachment to the institutions of the British Empire. These institutions have stimulated their progress and their wealth. They are now absorbed in the development of their vast local resources. Railways and steamboats, telegraphs and manufactures, and all the various varieties of human industry, are now occupying the minds of the colonies almost to the exclusion of everything else. All local ambitions slumber. The public men of the country seek their future now entirely in the development of their resources. That is what gives them the confidence of the people, and it is that to which their attention is most constantly directed. But I admit that a change in that respect is probably not very far off. We see in the case of Canada that it is semi-national now; its claims in that respect are largely recognised by the Imperial Government. There is never any interference; the bond of union is one of mutual attachment, and it is one which I think we certainly ought to strengthen, and will try to strengthen as much as possible; but at the same time I rather doubt whether a mere bond of sentimental attachment is strong enough. I think we want to have an alliance of material interests. I think we want to have some subjects in which we are true partners, in which we will share the losses and share the gains. There is one reason why a country like Canada should not desire separation. What is the future it would give us? We would become an insignificant independent country. At present we belong to the greatest empire in the world. It is our pride and boast that we do so; but if we once separate we drift off, and

become perhaps like one of the South American republics or one of the minor nations, which really exercise no influence on human affairs, and which are the very playthings of the powerful nations of the earth. Now it is far better to belong to this great empire, to continue an integral portion of it, than, from any mistaken idea, to pander to a cry for independence that would not satisfy. Now I have spoken of the loss of influence and advantage which I really believe would be entailed on the colonies by separation. Let me now ask you to consider what would be the effect on the United Kingdom itself. The colonies are the best field you have for the surplus labour and capital of this country. Reference has been most truly made by the Lord Provost to the sad condition of, I am afraid, millions of the lower masses of this country. They are getting crowded out of the various employments by which they live. They have to look abroad, and there is no part of the world to which they can look with such confidence as our own colonies for their future home. It is not a separation; it is not emigration in the sense of severing all those home ties which Scotsmen, at any rate, have such a reverence for. It is carrying with them abroad the remembrances of their old native country, and, as we know perfectly well, having the closest and most intimate relations with the friends they have left behind. They are your best customers. The statistical returns published monthly by the Board of Trade unquestionably show that of all parts of the world, of all the inhabitants of the earth, the British people abroad are the best customers for their fellow-countrymen at home. The emigration which has become a necessity for this country would in the future tend to be a source of weakness. At present it is a source of strength. It is a transference of what you can very well spare to those portions of the empire which require it, and the consequence is an additional strength here and additional strength there. But if these countries are separate from the United Kingdom, what is the result? They go to strengthen some foreign element. It may be a friendly one, but it may be, and very often is, an unfriendly one. Putting aside those reasons—which I think are in themselves very strong

material grounds for desiring to maintain the colonies in connection with the United Kingdom—I may say that politically there would be very serious results. The loss of Canada and Australia means the loss of the command of the Northern and Southern Pacific Oceans. If these great countries were separated from Great Britain, and were independent—and possibly at some future time they might be hostile—it is perfectly evident that the influence you now exercise over those great oceans would be materially threatened. It would, therefore, have an important influence upon your ability to hold the East Indies and the great Indian Empire, which is the pride and boast of us all. The influence of this country would be diminished by the loss of trade and the diminution of its shipping—by the diminution of the very power which it now possesses, and which is the strongest means of maintaining its influence in these outlying districts. It is the naval power of England that is behind and above the whole influence of these two islands, and therefore the deduction from that naval strength of all the commercial resources of the present colonies would be a very serious interference indeed, and would tend to diminish the influence of this country on foreign nations. It is no use being sentimental about the position we occupy towards foreign nations. We know perfectly well it is the material strength of this country that assures her an influence. It is not by speaking of the impropriety of war and the dangers and evils of it; it is not by that; it is because this country has the power, if her counsels are unheeded, of enforcing them, which is the basis of our national influence; and it is that which every one of the large countries of the world is at this moment trying to undermine and build up for themselves. I think, therefore that it is neither desirable, and certainly not necessary, that any change of the nature of separation should take place. I believe it would be fraught with the greatest possible injury, both to the possessions of this country abroad and to the mother country. Now, in continuing my remarks, I must, if I am to give you any of the ideas that are passing through my own mind, speak frankly, and I must ask your indulgence if I apparently tread upon points that it may be supposed I

would have been wise to avoid; but I do not think there is any use in standing up for the purpose of talking on such an important subject as the future of the British Empire, and withholding the opinions which one has and honestly entertains. I wish to submit those opinions, and to ask your indulgence for them. I would be very loth indeed to say one word that would be mischievous. My desire is, on the contrary, to say that which will prevent mischief. Now I admit that it would be almost useless to speak of any change in the system of government of the empire if the only ground I could put it upon were the interests of the colonial portion of it. No doubt attention would be given to their arguments; but we know perfectly well that as long as things are going on satisfactorily and well here, that this people are not lovers of change. They like to hold to what they have tried and found by experience to have been good, and therefore I must advert to points which have struck me, possibly as an outsider, as indicating that the present state of things in this country is undergoing a process of change. It is, no doubt, largely attributable to the Irish question—to the Irish agitation. It is almost impossible to avoid speaking of Ireland if one speaks on any public question at all. There is no doubt whatever—any one that has watched Parliamentary proceedings during the last three years must be aware—that the effect of that agitation has been largely to arrest the legislation that was desired, at any rate, by England and Scotland. It has largely arrested it, and the consequence has been that the House of Commons have found themselves overborne, over-weighted; and they have sought an escape from that position by, to a certain extent, sacrificing their independence for the sake of their efficiency. It is an acknowledgment on their part, it appears to me, that the pressure of business upon them had gone so far that, in order to discharge it, it was necessary for them to curtail what used to be the great privilege of the Imperial Parliament—free discussion. Now I believe it was absolutely necessary; I believe they could not avoid it. They had to make the sacrifice. They had either to see an indefinite postponement of measures that were loudly called for in England and Scotland,



or they had to arrive at some method by which the necessary time could be obtained for their consideration. They have also adopted another plan with the view of meeting the same difficulty, and that is in the appointment of Grand Committees. Now it appears to me that the logical result of these Grand Committees is that it is pointing to the delegation of the legislative powers that have been exercised by the whole House of Commons itself to certain Committees of the House. And those Committees, if they are to be of any influence at all, must be chosen from the persons best informed and most interested in the subjects that are referred to them. Now, if these Grand Committees, of which only two have been named, should ever succeed, it is certain, I think, that the principle will be extended, and that many local measures could be similarly referred—for instance, a measure connected with Scotland would be referred to such members in the House of Commons as had most intimate acquaintance with that part of the empire. And so, we may presume, with Ireland. Then, again, as I said, these Committees all point, in my judgment, to local self-government. It is found that there is a certain class of subjects which have hitherto been dealt with by the House of Commons, by the general Parliament, which they are now beginning to see could be better dealt with by the people more directly themselves; and we know that in the case of Ireland, and in the case, I think, of England too, that schemes are before the public with the view of endeavouring to meet that demand. Now we hear, too, that almost immediately following the passage of the bill for the extension of the county franchise there is going to be a redistribution of seats. It is impossible that a redistribution of seats can take place in this country without a great deal of local difficulty attending it. It is clear, if you look either at the population, or the wealth, or the influence of the different sections of the mother country, that there are certain portions which are less represented than they ought to be. Scotland has only 60 members, and Ireland has 103. That disproportion cannot be maintained; and at the same time, if you reduce it, or equalise it to anything like the rela-

tive claims of the two countries, you will find that you have added, I am afraid, very seriously to the Irish discontent. You will find that the objections which they now have to the rule of England in Ireland will be intensified if they have a smaller representation in the House of Commons; and yet I do not see how, in any redistribution of seats, it can be avoided. Moreover, it must be admitted that both England and Scotland are impatient. They are impatient under the difficulties that have arisen under the Irish question to a certain extent; there is a feeling in the country that things cannot long go on as they have been doing. And that compels me to say something in regard to Ireland itself. Now, in speaking of Ireland—and it is a subject in which one has to be very careful in saying anything about just now—I certainly should desire to be clearly understood that the maintenance of law and order is the one first principle that must be upheld. It is clear that the severest measures of coercion have been absolutely necessary. It is to be hoped that they will not long be necessary; but no one can look at the position of the sister island without seeing that the security of life and property must at all hazards be maintained, no matter how unpalatable it may be. At the same time, measures of coercion can only be temporary. It is impossible to keep such a country as Ireland constantly under coercion. It is repugnant to the feelings both of Scotchmen and Englishmen that any portion of their fellow-countrymen should be kept under by main force; and I must say that I consider it really a disgrace to the country that such a state of things should be necessary. But the difficulty is—and it is one that I certainly speak about with great hesitation and diffidence—we have to look at the causes of discontent in Ireland. I think they are twofold. There is the real practical distress which exists in Ireland, and there is also the sentimental grievance, which I apprehend is the more serious of the two. The disaffection which exists in Ireland is not so much that England has misgoverned Ireland, but that England governs Ireland at all. They object to the government. They have

resented the transference of the management of their local affairs to a body which, as they conceive, is unable to appreciate their feelings and to deal practically and uprightly with them. The effect of these two causes of discontent is that it calls into existence the law of action and reaction. We see the distress in the West of Ireland; we hear of the distress which is stated to be in other districts of Ireland; and that distress, we know perfectly well, is largely caused by the withdrawal of confidence, which is the basis of the employment of capital in the country. It is because confidence is shaken in Ireland that the means of employment of the people is diminished, and the result is that the one cause is operating upon the other. The distress of Ireland cannot be cured so long as you have such a feeling of insecurity in regard to property there. It appears perfectly clear that you cannot, by simply dealing with the condition of real practical distress, cure the whole of the evils which we all deplore, and the excesses which I am sorry to see are rife in that island. Emigration, no doubt, would go a certain length in remedying the distress in certain portions of Ireland where the population is greater than the land would support. Emigration would largely cure it, and I am glad to believe that emigration to a certain extent will form, and is forming, part of the efforts made by the Government to restore something like prosperity to the sister island. But, after all, I think that the Irish demand for self-government, or, as it is called—though the term is one I scarcely like to use—Home Rule, is really what this country will have to consider—whether it is not possible to give to Ireland such a measure of self-government as will remove this growing grievance, sentimental if you will, but still not the less real. Now I believe that very remarkable man who is now the Premier of this country—I believe that the invitation—for it amounted to that—which he enunciated at the beginning of last session to the Irish members to propound what they thought would be acceptable in the way of self-government for their country, indicated in Mr. Gladstone's mind the opinion that some measure had to be taken in that direction—that it was not possible to allow the present state of things in Ireland to go on.

It was possible to put down disorder, it was possible to punish crime; but it is not possible by legislation to restore satisfaction and contentment. The invitation which Mr. Gladstone addressed to the Irish members was taken up rather more seriously by the Canadian Parliament. As probably you may remember, there was an address passed by the Parliament of Canada to the Queen, praying that she would give her assent to a measure for the self-government of Ireland. Now I may be permitted to digress for a very few moments to say something in regard to that. The reasons for it are not perhaps unworthy of your attention. In Canada we have nearly a million of Irishmen or their descendants. They have felt perhaps as great an interest in the fate of their countrymen at home as if they were resident there; but, beyond all that, there are six or seven millions of the same race in the United States, and the Irish in Canada are necessarily affected by the opinions which are expressed by their countrymen across the frontier. Their publications reach them, and it is a source of great anxiety to us in Canada whenever anything causes excitement in Ireland, because it spreads inevitably to the United States. Let me instance the case of the Fenians, who at one time invaded Canada. They cost us a million and a half sterling to repulse them; they cost us the lives of some of our very best young men. Now it is not by any means from a mere desire to give unsought-for advice that the people of Canada may express opinions upon that subject; it is because we have perhaps next to yourselves, and perhaps even more than yourselves, a direct interest in the thorough pacification of Ireland and the settlement of all its difficulties. And besides that, singularly enough, we have had in our Confederation in Canada an almost parallel case, which you will pardon me for mentioning, in the case of the province of Quebec, in Lower Canada. It was a conquered country, inhabited by a foreign race, speaking a foreign language, having foreign laws. They were kept under by a small English minority. They were given a constitution about 90 years ago. Under that constitution they endeavoured to obtain the control of their own affairs, but they found themselves constantly

checked by the superior power of the governing race. The result was a rebellion, which was, of course, put down; and then the remedy which was applied was to unite the province of Lower Canada, now the province of Quebec, with the English province of Ontario. The result of that union for a few years was as satisfactory as could be desired; but presently the English province grew so rapidly in population and in wealth that the time arrived when the French province began to be again alarmed in regard to their language, their institutions, and their laws. We arrived at a dead-lock. We got into a position not very much different from the position in which Great Britain and Ireland are to-day. We could not work our system, and we then found our remedy, not by giving self-government only to Quebec, but by extending the principle of federation to the other provinces of North America, by bringing in new blood and new ideas; and the consequence has been that peace, tranquillity, and progress have signalised the whole state of Canada since the Confederation became law. Now I quite believe, following that very instance, that it is impossible to grant Ireland self-government alone; there would be such an antagonism between the Parliaments on either side of the Channel that probably a worse state of things would arise than exists to-day. I venture to think that the remedy may be sought for in extending or adopting the principle of federation to the whole empire, or at least to that portion of it which now enjoys self-government. I think that that is the only direction in which we can look for the means of satisfying what are perhaps exaggerated ideas and exaggerated claims, but still not the less necessary to be satisfied. I think it is in that direction alone that we can find an escape. Now there is nothing novel in what I am saying. I am only repeating what has been mentioned over and over again by public men in this country. It has been discussed in the press, and, notably, Earl Grey a few years ago propounded absolutely an elaborate plan whereby confederation was to be brought about, and whereby these various colonies should have the opportunity of expressing themselves in regard to the government of the whole empire. But the circum-

stances of the country itself at this moment may make it worth while for thoughtful men, such as I see before me, to consider whether there may not be in that principle some escape from the evils that we are likely to experience here. I am quite prepared to say that as regards everything it would be an unmixed good. It would certainly tend to consolidate the empire, to bring the inherent elements of strength more directly under the control of the principal Government, and increase her influence and strength. The general principle would be simply the consolidation of the general interests which concern us all, whether we are East or West, or North or South—the consolidation of these under one general Legislature, and the localising of the sectional questions which are not imperial to England, to Scotland, to Ireland, or to Canada or Australia. There are certain local questions which they can deal with better than anybody else can; and I believe that it would be very much better if they were dealt with by all whose interests are really embarked in them. I would not venture to attempt to suggest even the details by which such a policy could be adopted. My object this afternoon has been rather to bring the subject before you, and to suggest it as one which I think might well be worth consideration and discussion. I do not think it would be time lost, by any means, if the statesmen of this country would see whether there may not be in the Irish claim for self-government a principle involved that would tend to the great advantage of the empire at large. I do not believe that the statesmen of this country are unequal to the difficulties of such a task. On the contrary, I believe that the difficulties which they now are encountering are greater than any that would follow the attempt to solve the problem. The difficulty of constantly applying an anodyne to an acute disease is worse than that of dealing directly with the disease itself. I venture to think that if the consideration of such subjects as I have occupied your attention with this afternoon were referred to leading men in this country, and to leading colonists, it would not be very difficult to elaborate a plan that would commend itself to the judgment of the thoughtful people of this country. I

believe the difficulties would vanish as they were approached. There cannot be any inherent danger in it, while we see we have examples before us. We have the great example of the United States. We have also the example of the German Empire; we have the Confederation of Canada, as comparing very small things with great; we have also the Dutch Republic, the Swiss Confederation—in fact, without going back to former history, there are abundance of examples where countries have had to consider these very subjects, and where they have found a successful solution for the problem. I apologise for having ventured to occupy your time so long, and I must also again repeat my apology for having ventured to touch upon these subjects. I hope my excuse will be found in the fact that I take myself personally the warmest and strongest interest in the development of such a policy as will give me the assurance before I die that my children will remain subjects of the British Queen. It would even be something gained, I think, if it were shown that such a thing was impracticable, because then, instead of looking to this mode of extrication, we would seek to find out some other. I cannot believe that the statesmen who have built up this great empire have not bequeathed ability and talent enough to their successors to hold it together. The truth is, it appears to be growing beyond the present system, and beyond the system of government which has brought it up to this point. Its interests have become so diversified and so vast in all portions of the world, the influence which it exercises is so great, that I think the time is rapidly approaching when consideration must be given to some change in the system. I think the events of the last three years, and the action of the House of Commons, have shown that things cannot long be maintained on the present lines. There has been a departure, and a most important departure. In other days it would have been called a revolution in our Parliamentary system of government—and we know that revolutions never stop—and I only hope that as the necessity for further changes comes, these changes may seek a direction which will give vitality and permanence to the British Empire.

*An ADDRESS delivered in the TONTINE HOTEL, GREENOCK,  
on 29th January, 1883.*

---

PROVOST WILSON in the Chair.

---

Sir ALEXANDER GALT, after some introductory remarks, said:—Provost Wilson and gentlemen,—I am not going to repeat the speech I made in Edinburgh; but when I spoke there it was in the knowledge that I should have an opportunity of saying a few words on this occasion, and therefore one or two points that I might have elaborated more fully in speaking upon the great question of the United Kingdom and our colonies I shall now be able to speak upon in a more detailed way than I then did. You will recollect that it is only a few days since representatives of the self-governing colonies had the honour of a formal reception for the first time by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Derby, who received us in our character as representing the colonies that were to a certain extent not dependent upon the Colonial Office, but dependent upon the will of the people they represented. There was one expression that fell from Lord Derby that certainly imprinted itself upon my mind. Speaking of the future of the empire, he said that he believed that its greatness would be found in the development of its colonial possessions, rather than in the interest it might feel in European affairs. Now, we all know that Lord Derby has a very high reputation as a statesman; but I think he is perhaps more than almost any other man in Parliament a representative of the sound common sense of this country. And in that character I do think that he spoke the feelings of the great bulk of the people of this country when he said



that he felt that the future of the empire was not to be confined to these islands, but would be extended and brought to a higher measure of greatness through the means of her colonial possessions. Having the remembrance before me of this remark of Lord Derby, I ventured to say, in speaking in Edinburgh, that there were two points in which I thought the colonies might be fairly commended to the attention of their fellow-subjects in this country. One was that they afforded the best field for the surplus labour and capital of this country; and next, that they were the best customers. Now, speaking merely without reference to political considerations, these are two questions that I think will come home to all practical men. If the colonies are a vast field for what you can dispense with, and if they are the best customers for what you produce, then clearly they are the countries with whom you should not merely maintain your connection, but do all in your power to extend it. I must not take advantage of the kindness which you are extending to me this afternoon, and I shall not trespass too long upon your time; but I will venture to ask you to bear with me if I endeavour to some extent to elaborate these two ideas. The first question in connection with the best field for your surplus labour is, evidently, Have you any surplus labour, and do you want any field for it? Now I think that question must be answered by every gentleman now present in the affirmative. There is no doubt—I grieve to say it, but I do not think it can possibly be disputed—there is no doubt in this country an over-population, an overcrowding in the professions. We see the depression in agriculture, but I shall not dwell upon that; we know that there is an overcrowding in the professions, and I shall not dwell upon that. But behind and beyond it all is the presence in our midst of a vast mass of pauperism, a vast body of people who cannot, however willing they may be, get a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. Now, it is to deal with that evil that the colonies offer you an escape; and it is because you have this surplus labour which is depressing the wages of those who are employed, and is burdening the resources of this country with unnecessary weight, that this

transference of the burden to Canada, Australia, or any of the colonies, would be turning into a support to you that which is now a burden. Speaking of emigration, if it be admitted that emigration is desirable—and I think the people themselves have solved that question for us, because emigration is one of the recognised institutions of this land, and will take place whether you like it or not—there are certain conditions which I think we may look to for successful emigration, and for the choice of a country to which the people may go. There are three conditions. One is accessibility; and another is fitness of climate and soil; and the last is fitness of its associations—the social conditions which exist. With reference to accessibility I need not, in a commercial town like Greenock, say one word. You know that, as far as Canada is concerned, there are ships going to and from that colony almost every day. They carry out hundreds and thousands of people in the course of a year—carry them to Montreal, and deliver them on the shores of Canada. The question of accessibility, therefore, may be answered in favour of Canada. But there is that of fitness of climate and soil; and I wish to say a few words upon it, because, though they are scarcely required here, still the question is very often asked, and by people whom I should have expected to be better informed, “Is the climate of Canada such as we can exist in?” I think the answer is found in the feelings of the people who live there. I would not exchange a day of our midwinter for a day of your Scotch winter. It could not be supposed that we would be such fools as to stay in Canada if it was not a country we liked, and if the climate was not suitable for us. We would not stay there, and keep our children there, and try to get our friends there, if that was not the case. It is impossible that we could be so unwise as that. There is one fact which I happened to learn in Edinburgh when I was there last week. I am connected with the Standard Life Office, being one of their local directors, and I asked them, “What do your tables of mortality show of Canada as compared with this country?” The gentleman I was addressing said, “I can answer your question,

because I had the figures made up only a short time ago. The deaths there are only 70 per cent. as large as the tables should show." That is a satisfactory result; and I think, when that is the commercial value of life in Canada, those of you who desire to prolong your days cannot do better than proceed thither. Then comes the question of whether the soil is suitable. Well, I do not suppose there is any gentleman who hears me—and especially when there are many gentlemen around me with a knowledge of Canada—will think I need say much upon that point. We know it is capable of producing all the cereals that are raised in the British Isles; we know that it produces them in profusion, and that it has also a large export of them—not so large as it will be in the future, still sufficiently large to show what may be expected. I have myself within the last four months travelled in that new country, Manitoba, and the Great North-West. I travelled a thousand miles right round from Winnipeg to the Rocky Mountains, for the first 500 miles by a railway constructed within that one year, and I do not think I saw one single mile of country that would not have made an excellent farm. That extended north and south, and east and west. And if you consider for a moment the vast extent of country that represents, I think you will be of opinion with me that no doubt for ages to come there will be room for as many of the sons of Scotchmen as choose to go out. I do not wish—it would be unfair—to make anything like a lengthened speech. I only wish to illustrate a statement I made in Edinburgh that it is the best field—I do not mean Canada alone, and I particularly desire you should not understand me so, because I believe that other colonies will bear examination quite as well as Canada—except that Canada is more accessible, and I take Canada because I am speaking from a personal knowledge of fifty years. I have lived both in Ontario and in Quebec, and I travelled for two years in the north-west, and therefore I speak with perfect personal knowledge when I say that in regard to climate and soil I never saw a finer country in my life. However, that might be true, and yet it might not be the best field for your surplus labour. It might be that there were other countries, foreign

countries—the United States of America might claim to be a better field. But the United States has this great disadvantage, that, so far as you are concerned at least, if a man gets there he ceases to be a British subject, and, as I shall presently have occasion to show you, he thereby ceases to be one of your best customers. Now the institutions of the country are certainly as good in Canada as they could be anywhere. We have the most perfect system of self-government. We have as good a system of education as exists in the world. We have the most efficient administration of the law; justice is done as perfectly as it can be here. There is nothing to desire in that respect. Indeed, I believe that in some important particulars we have even advantages over you, because in our legislation—I speak it with all submission—we have perhaps been able to avoid some of the errors which you have borrowed from your ancestry. If, then, it be true that the colonies are the fittest point to which you can direct yourselves, and if a man going there and remaining a British subject connects him still with you in a material sense, and enables him to serve your interests, I think it only remains for me to take up the other branch of the subject with which I started—to prove to you that the British colonies are the best customers which this country has. Now, having been an old Finance Minister, I am very little indeed unless I use figures. At the same time I would scarcely venture to do so in an ordinary assembly, but I had the honour of an invitation from the Chamber of Commerce, which has been united with that which the Provost and Magistrates gave me, and, speaking to commercial gentlemen, I may venture to use as few as I can, sufficient to prove the contention with which I set out, when I undertook to show that the British possessions are the best customers which this country possesses. I could perhaps come near enough the facts from recollection, but I prefer using figures. Now, on this subject I had occasion to make an official report about a year ago—I mean on the question of the British export trade—to the Government of Canada. It was a confidential report, but I venture, notwithstanding that, to use some of the figures, which

were prepared by me with very great care for that purpose. I may say that it was a review of the Board of Trade returns of the imports and exports of this country between the period of the census of 1871 and the census of 1881. My object was to endeavour to find out how far the export trade of this country was improving, or tending to the improvement of, the labouring classes. The next point was to ascertain how far that employment of the labouring classes was being created by Europe, by the rest of the foreign world, or by the British possessions. That was the point that I selected for analysis. I think I can show you that I was correct in taking up the export trade as being the proper subject for analysis, because it appeared to me to be clear that, as regarded the outer world, the export trade of the country, whatever it may be, must be the measure of employment which it has given to the capital and labour of this country. You send out, whether it be manufactures or the products of your mines, so much British and Irish produce, and they are represented by so much money. That is the value of those articles which have been created by the capital and the labour of this country. The imports of food have a great deal to do with the comforts of the people, but they have nothing to do with the question of employment in this country, or, if there is anything raised by it, it is a question which I do not propose this afternoon to discuss. I found that the only true measure of comparison must be with reference to population. Now the population in 1871 was 31,845,371; in 1880 it had risen to 35,246,562. I think the export trade was almost exactly the same in those two years—it was £223,666,162 in 1871, and £223,060,446 in 1880. Now, the amount which that export trade represented per head in 1871 was £7 0s. 1d.; in 1880 it was only £6 6s. 7d., showing the large diminution of 13s. 6d. per head of the population. That was not a desirable feature to shew in connection with the export trade of the country, and therefore I proceed to find out the reason, and how it was distributed, which may lead us to some very important conclusions. I found that there were certain countries which may be classed manufacturing countries, which competed, if not in this country, certainly in

foreign markets. These are France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Spain, Italy, and the United States. I find that in 1871 we had exported to these countries £109,627,395, and in 1880 only £87,091,706—showing that per head we had exported in the one year £3 8s. 10d., and in the last year £2 9s. 5d., being a reduction of 19s. 5d., or nearly one-third of the whole bulk. I find that for the rest of the foreign world, excluding the British possessions, the figures in 1871 were £62,188,554, and in 1880 £60,714,561, showing the trade remaining very much the same. But in the British possessions the trade had risen from £51,250,213 in 1871 to £75,254,179 in 1880. Now I take it that is a very remarkable statement—your trade with all the great nations of Europe and the United States had fallen off nearly one-third, that your trade with the rest of the world was at a standstill, and that your trade with your possessions had risen 50 per cent. That is only half the case. The other half, if you will allow me, I will now proceed to state. There are such things as imports of manufactured goods as well as exports, and it may be well to look where they come from. The European countries I have named and the United States send to this country manufactured goods—not wines, not food, but manufactured goods, what we call the produce of the loom, textile fabrics, &c., &c. They sent us in 1871 £36,003,074, and in 1880 £58,329,224. The increase of your exports to them had fallen off, and your imports from them had risen from £36,003,074 to £58,329,224. The rest of the world stood nearly equal, about £2,000,000. Now, bringing those figures down to the question of percentage, I find this result—that the export trade of this country, without reference to the imports, in 1871, to the large manufacturing countries of Europe formed 49 per cent.; in 1880 they had fallen to 39 per cent. The foreign world, outside of Europe and the United States, had fallen from 28 per cent. in 1871 to 27 per cent. in 1880; the British possessions had risen from 23 per cent. in 1871 to 34 per cent. in 1880. But consider—and I am now speaking with reference to the question of the employment of labour and capital in this country—that every pound's sterling

worth of goods imported by you represents the displacement of so much labour in this country, if we could produce the same goods at a profit. We, therefore, must consider what amount of goods we have imported from those countries, and how the balance stands with reference to the employment that is given to our labouring population and our capital. And this is the result, and it is a remarkable one: in 1871, deducting the imports of manufactured goods, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Spain, Italy, and the United States furnish 40 per cent. of the entire trade; in 1880 it had fallen to 18 per cent. The rest of the foreign world had risen from 33 per cent. to 37 per cent., and the colonies had risen from 27 per cent. to 45 per cent. Now, Provost, I think I have proved my case. These are figures which may be submitted to any analysis you please. They are Board of Trade figures, and I will vouch for their accuracy; and the proof is that, taking the employment of capital and labour as represented by the import and export trade in manufactured goods, the British possessions are very nearly furnishing one-half of your trade. Of the figures for 1881-82, the years subsequent to this comparison, those figures, I pledge myself, carry out the same result even more strongly than has been stated. The increase of your export trade has more than half been due to the demands of your colonies. Now, Provost and gentlemen, is it possible that as men of business, desiring to see this country prosper, looking in the most selfish light possible, that you can look with indifference to the two points—to the one either that your population should flow away to and build up a foreign country—I speak it without the least animosity—like the United States of America, or that you should hesitate for one moment in extending to your colonies the support which they desire, in furnishing them with this surplus labour, which is a burden to you? I do not think that there can be any hesitation in regard to it. I think that with those two points I have put before you, with the wants of this country, the want of employment of your labour, whether it may be by sending your surplus labour abroad or finding employment for it at home, you will see that the true policy is to develop the industry of your

fellow-countrymen on the other side of the Atlantic and on the Southern Seas. For this question it is immaterial where they go, provided they remain under the flag of this country, which has been, and I trust will continue to be for years, the emblem under which Christianity, peace, and civilisation will be spread throughout the world. Of course, Provost, it is natural that colonist as I am—though I am also a Scotchman: I do not mean to give it up—as a colonial Scotchman, perhaps, to put it in that way—it is natural that I should feel strongly, if a doubt entered into my mind for a moment that my fellow-subjects here do not share the feelings that I have in regard to the mutual advantages that will flow from the extension of our common rights and our common empire. It is natural, I say, that I should feel strongly on that point, and that I should indulge in suggestions more or less vague, more or less in the future, in regard to what may be done; and I do claim, on behalf of the colonial empire, that statesmen in this country, that you gentlemen who are concerned in the business of this country, should give your thought and consideration to such points as I have put before you this afternoon; that you will consider whether your own interests, apart from the grandeur of the empire itself, whether your own interests will not be best served by taking care that this great empire does not drift back again into those divided elements out of which the genius and heroism of its sons, and especially of its Scotch sons, have done so much to bring it together.



